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Reader upset with American role in the Gulf

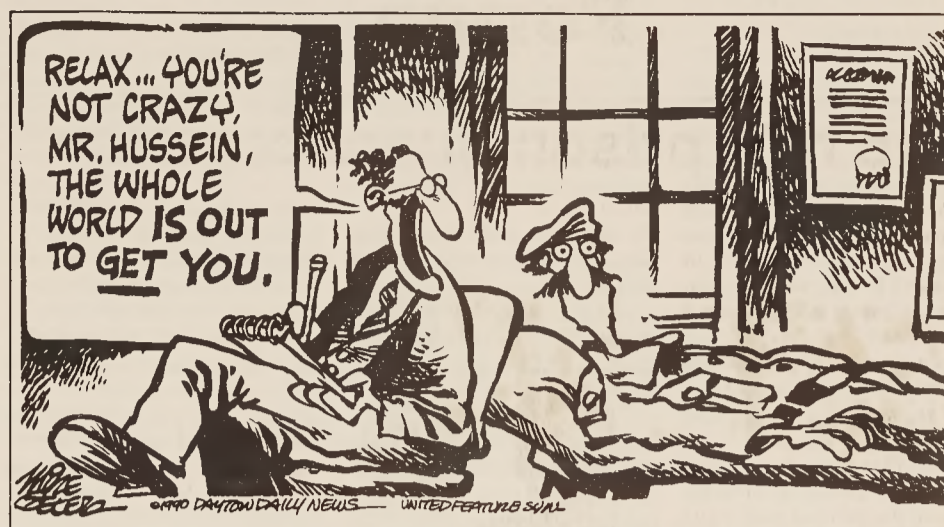
To The Editor:

In less than 100 years, we have become so culturally dependent on oil that the U.S. is prepared to go to war to keep it flowing cheaply and abundantly. Less than 100 years from now, there will not be enough oil left to maintain projected demands at any price, military or otherwise.

It is a sickening but unavoidable play on words to say that the Middle East is soaked in gasoline and that Saddam Hussein holds a lit match. The industrialized world, with the U.S. in lead, is inextricably involved in an ensuing explosion.

We have been warned before about the dangers-political, economic, and ecological, of so wholly a petroleum-based culture. While the private automobile is certainly the major player in the big oil game, few of us realize how oil-clogged the veins of our way of life have truly become.

Agricultural chemicals, paints, solvents, all plastics, in fact, very little that we now use does not have at least origins in oil. Unfortunately, oil is one of the few natural resources not abundantly available within our borders, and is non-renewable. It is a



poor peg on which to hang our hopes for the future.

Even with astute conservation measures-something we still aren't taking very seriously--affluent cultures have little time, in numbers of generations, to implement alternative means of fueling our lives. Many of these have been identified and developed, but will remain largely on the shelf as long as oil companies can charge what they want and get it, and

CHRONICLE MAILBAG Our Readers Speak Out

as long as we as a nation prefer the specter of war to that of public transportation, local production and consumption of goods, and changing our patterns of energy use.

I am very disappointed by the U.S.'s upstaging of the United Nations in the Persian Gulf. Amid

vague talk about preserving American Way of Life, National Security and U.S. Interests, we are all eager to make this "our" before it even becomes one.

John M. Hart
Dan

Police Review Committee: An idea whose time has come

FOR more than 20 years now, the Winston-Salem Chapter of the NAACP has literally begged city leaders to establish a citizen's police review board. Their pleas have fallen on deaf ears.

NAACP officials have decided to take matters into their own hands and establish a review board of their own to chronicle police actions in dealing with African-Americans in this city.

In their view, there have been far too many questionable and brutal acts by white city police officers against African-Americans. Some have even gone so far as to say that they believe officers engaged in such actions have been given "the green light". If those perceptions, real or imagined, are allowed to go unchecked or at the very least unquestioned, then the trust the police department claims it so desperately wants to build in the African-American community will never be developed.

What would this review board of the NAACP be able to do? It would be able to document the claims of those who felt they had been treated unfairly or unusually harsh by the police. That group could take the information they obtained directly to the Board of Aldermen's Public Safety Committee chair or to the Police Chief. The review board could also call for state or federal help in those cases where there is a general consensus that the police department is not policing itself or the unwarranted acts of some of its officers.

The people who serve on this committee should not be only members of the NAACP. The committee should include retired police officers, attorneys, community leaders, a representative from the city human relations department and others.

The claims of harsh treatment from African-Americans in this city are coming with frightening regularity. Some claims may be without foundation. But we all know the old saying, "Where there's smoke there's fire." These days there seems to be a great deal of smoke circling the air above our city and a lot of it is coming from incidents involving local law enforcement.

Since the city has opted not to listen to the persistent urging of some of its citizens to form a group to review questionable police actions, the NAACP has decided to act on its own. And quite frankly, it's about time.

In the last four months, there have been four incidents where a white officer has been accused of beating up on an African-American. In three of those incidents the people abused were African-American women.

If African-American officers in the police or sheriff's departments know that these kinds of acts are taking place but remain silent, they are as guilty as those who do the deed. Information provided by these officers or other white officers who do not agree with what they see would go a long way toward helping the department do a better job of policing itself.

There are many in the African-American community who believe that the department is incapable of taking a long hard look at itself and taking action to right the wrong it finds. As long as that feeling lasts, the deep valley of mistrust will remain.

And if a review board set up by the NAACP is the only way to shed some light on an increasingly ugly situation, then so be it.

The Jackson mercy mission

THE mercy mission of the Rev. Jesse Jackson to gain the release of hostages held in Iraq and Kuwait has been the topic of controversy around the country.

People have questioned his motives for making the trip. "More political grandstanding," some have said. Others say it is because he sincerely cares about what is happening to Americans in the Middle East. Still others charge he allowed himself to be used by Saddam Hussein.

Whatever his motivation, the man did what he set out to do, gain the release of at least some of the hostages. And for those who were released and are once again back on American soil and safe, they don't much care what Jackson's motives may have been. They are just thankful someone came and got them out. That, after all, was the bottom line.

All those who are trying to second-guess why Jackson takes on such missions are only wasting their time and mental energy in an exercise that has little meaning, especially for those who had been captives of Hussein.

Culture, not race, is salient to making changes

Though presently in the throes of a crisis in the Middle East, this country's problem with racism will be here when the Mideast crisis is over. For sure, racism is a blight that must be eradicated, and one of the reasons racism is so prevalent -- and thriving -- despite all the rhetoric to the contrary, is because of the ineffectiveness of the battles against it.

More specifically, racism, like any other enemy, must be carefully analyzed and a strategically sound battle plan must be devised to combat it.

The insidious nature of racism, however, camouflages the scourge to the point that it is so embedded into the fabric of our society that we have developed a ritual "racism paranoia" and label everything we deem racially unfavorable as racist.

Too often our assessment is correct, but I also think we are wrong more times than we would like to admit. This racism camouflage is what presents the problem.

We must never forget: This republic was founded by white men for white men and everyone else,

including white women, is inferior based on the philosophy of that founding. Consequently, virtually every standard is either set by or measured against those dictated by white men.

The concept of racial superiority,

people, because the two are not necessarily the same.

There are many whites who are just as outraged and frustrated as non-whites about the degree of racism in this country, and in a significant effort to address this concern, many entities,

against racism are some of the primary perpetrators of the status quo well.

I don't believe this is intentional but the result is the same. In many cases ignorance, not racism, is the problem.

Culture, for example, not race, makes us different, and how can we be sensitive to another's culture if one does not understand the culture? We say one cannot, and because our nation is more multicultural now than ever and the cultures are growing more diverse by the day, multicultural education must be included as a weapon in the fight against racism.

Until this nation concentrates on understanding why people are different; until this nation understands and becomes sensitive to, and respects those differences, making progress against racism will be like treading water: We'll be making a lot of noise and expending a lot of energy but getting nowhere.

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AGAINST THE GRAIN

By ROOSEVELT WILSON

the genesis of racism, is a significant component of that philosophy, and when non-whites perform poorly on exercises based on white experiences, the myth of superiority/inferiority is further perpetuated.

Not recognizing this and not including it as a major focus in the fight against racism contribute as much as anything else to the lack of success in this battle.

Blacks must understand that we are fighting a white system, not white

particularly in corporate America, for a number of years, have conducted or participated in programs to promote racial harmony and sensitivity. Unfortunately, based on numerous studies and media reports from around the nation today, these programs have enjoyed only minimal success.

For the racist this is understandable because nothing more than being different is required to be the object of racism. But a bitter irony is that many whites out front in the fight

Will blacks cancel conventions, buy hotels?

TONY BROWN Syndicated Columnist

of action for their millions of members. That means billions of consumer dollars will be returning home to create jobs and businesses.

The invitation asking me to keynote this historic gathering said: "As one who has dealt with self help for years and had your message fall upon deaf ears, I am sure you realize how important it will be to us and the movement for the persons who assemble at this conference to hear first hand your cogent and accurate assessment of what African-American people can do for themselves."

My message was: "Choose between self-help and no-help." I began by saying that 150 black organizations spend \$3 billion each summer in white hotels discussing white racism and black poverty. Black Americans do not own one

hotel in this country.

Specifically, I urged these leaders to cancel their respective 1992 conventions and use the \$3 billion they spend annually to develop an economic infrastructure for the black community.

This \$3 billion can be leveraged to \$30 billion in financial markets and deposited in black lending institutions. Some of it can be used for loans to community people with good ideas who want to become self-employed, some to expand existing businesses and all of it as a capital base.

For only \$400 million (about the annual interest on \$3 billion) a black coalition (or individual organizations) could own first rate hotels in the 20 largest urban areas. In turn, these hotels would be the recipients of our annual \$3 billion convention market.

Shirley Chisholm, who delivered a spellbinding luncheon speech at the summit, offered \$25,000 of

her own money toward the purchase of a major black-owned hotel.

You can help directly by spending 50% of your consumer income with a business designated by Freedom Seal. The seal designates the businesses that are committed to reinvest in the black community. Next, ask your organization to cancel its 1992 convention and invest the money saved in the future of our people.

Our 65,000 churches (with 10 million members) can serve as a capital redistribution base. Ask your minister to start "God's Buy Freedom Plan" and recycle 50% of your church's spending power of your church's new jobs for the churches' social programs that benefit the neighborhood. And/or start a special Buy Freedom group of 10 or more people to teach your dollars some sense.

Contact me for details on any of these proposals at 1501 Broadway, Suite 2014, New York, NY 10036 or call (212) 575-0876.

The tragedy of Marion Barry is the tragedy of U.S. law gone mad

For months, the media followed the controversial trial of Washington, D.C. mayor Marion Barry with a perverse mixture of fascination and disgust. Sex, drugs and public illegality always sell. The Barry trial had it all. Acting as a legal pimp, the federal government obtained the services of Barry's ex-girlfriend, Rasheeda Moore, to snag its victim. Ample evidence was presented in the trial proving to most observers that Barry had been a casual user of drugs for many years. Evidence of government malfeasance was abundant as well. Scores of Barry lieutenants and confidants had been indicted and convicted of various crimes during the past decade.

The political circus came to a disappointing end, however, when the

jury found the mayor guilty of only one misdemeanor -- possessing cocaine. It acquitted him of one count, and couldn't agree on twelve additional charges. Barry now claims that he was vindicated, and has announced plans to run as an independent for a D.C. Council Seat.

Marion Barry is surely guilty of many things -- dependence on cocaine, infidelity to his silent and long suffering wife, and most of all, political stupidity. But the Barry case makes no sense outside of its broader political and racial context. The federal government's entire case rested on entrapment of the worst kind. No one seriously believes that Barry's decision to enter a hotel room with his former lover was dictated by a desire for crack. Sex, not drugs, motivated

ALONG THE COLOR LINE By MANNING MARABLE

the mayor. Barry's certainly guilty of adultery, and his libido is out of control. His problems with alcohol and cocaine certainly make him unfit to hold public office. But the authorities would have been wiser to pressure Barry to resign, in lieu of facing criminal charges and a protracted and disruptive court trial. Instead, they were determined to place the black Democrat in a federal prison.

Barry's central argument which attempted to justify his behavior was the thesis that a pattern of FBI and judicial harassment exists against African-American civil rights leaders and elected officials. The argument is

certainly true, based on the evidence over nearly half a century. In my own research on a political biography of black American leader Malcolm X, I have uncovered an extensive pattern of illegal electronic surveillance, the opening of private mail without warrants, and political harassment. COINTELPRO, the FBI's Counterintelligence Program in the sixties, plotted the destruction of civil rights organizations, and led to the imprisonment of hundreds of black activists. In the 1980's, hundreds of black elected officials, judges and other community leaders were subjected disproportionately to surveillance and harass-

ment. Congressman John Conyers and other members of the Congressional Black Caucus have investigated many instances of political harassment aimed at blacks. The goal is to reduce African-American political clout within the system, and to intimidate leaders to back away from challenging the establishment.

But the real tragedy of Marion Barry lies not in his cocaine dependency, which he shares with literally millions of white, Hispanic, and black Americans. His tragedy is his inability to place his community's objective interests ahead of his own. By his series of errors and criminal acts, Barry has undermined the drive for D.C. statehood for years. His behavior provides justification for racists and political reactionaries to under-

mine other African-American leaders. But his greatest tragedy was Barry's failure of vision. The great strength of the black freedom struggle's political tradition, from Frederick Douglass to Martin Luther King, Jr., was the linkage between politics and ethics.

What was morally correct was also politically correct. Barry's contempt for the ethics of the black struggle, his contempt for his wife, children and constituents, could never be justified. Marion Barry's only service which he could perform would be to withdraw permanently from public life.

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